

Police launch human trafficking and sexual exploitation campaign



Police Scotland has today launched its first ever campaign targeting the perpetrators of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The campaign seeks to highlight that people are being trafficked and sexually exploited in plain sight across Scotland and to raise public awareness of what may be going on in their communities.

Traffickers are making potentially millions of pounds out of sexually exploiting people in Scotland.

One woman, trafficked to Scotland and rescued during a police operation in Glasgow, was forced into prostitution seven days a week, at least eight hours a day and her exploiters were charging £120 per hour. She had been in Scotland for three months.

Since 1st January 2018, 44 women and two men have identified themselves as victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and came forward to seek support. Of those, seven were girls under the age of 18.

Assistant Chief Constable Gillian MacDonald, Crime and Protection lead for Police Scotland, said, "Sexual exploitation, or prostitution, is highly lucrative for criminal gangs who exploit people and place them at risk of

significant harm.

“People may reply to an advertisement offering work in Scotland and find themselves forced into prostitution for the financial gain of criminals.”

On one day alone more than 1700 adverts relating to people involved in prostitution in Scotland appeared on the internet. Not all of those people will be victims of exploitation but many will be.

ACC MacDonald said, “Sexual exploitation takes place behind closed doors. Premises may be rented out short term from landlords or agencies who have no idea that their properties are being used for this purpose. Equally, there are landlords who may own numerous properties and who know exactly what is happening in those premises.

“People are being trafficked into and around Scotland and it is unacceptable that people are being bought and sold, exploited and abused in this way. We are asking people to be aware and to report if they believe someone is being trafficked or exploited.

“We will target those who control, abuse and exploit others by working collaboratively with partners to ensure that Scotland is and remains a hostile environment to this trade.”

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf said, “Human trafficking and exploitation are appalling abuses of human rights, leaving victims highly traumatised and living in fear. It is completely unacceptable these crimes are taking place in modern Scotland and we are determined to do all we can to support victims and target perpetrators. Police Scotland’s tough and targeted approach to tracking down the criminals profiting from this abuse is reaping results and I am pleased to support their latest campaign focussing on human trafficking and sexual exploitation.”

Bronagh Andrew, TARA Operations Manager, said, "Since 2004, the Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA) run by Community Safety Glasgow, has been providing intensive support and protection to women traumatised by their experiences in Scotland. Trafficked women do not give consent and those who pay for sex are a significant part of the problem so we are pleased to support this vital campaign from Police Scotland targeting the perpetrators of this serious crime.

"The majority of women we support were unaware that they were destined to be sexually exploited in Scotland. They have survived significant harm at the hands of traffickers and those who have paid to sexually abuse them. In order to prevent and eradicate this form of gender based violence a holistic partnership approach must be taken, from raising awareness amongst the public and frontline services to encourage reporting and recovery of victims to disrupting trafficking networks to challenging the demand from those who pay for sex in Scotland."

In recent operations across Scotland, 12 potential victims of trafficking were identified. One operation involved Police Scotland working with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Romanian police. It resulted in seven people from an eastern European crime gang being arrested in Romania and a number of potential victims were rescued from sexual exploitation in Glasgow.

All of these victims were based in privately rented premises being used for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. All of the flats were in busy city centre communities, and all of it was happening in plain sight.

Trafficking operations are complex and prolonged often involving multiple agencies, including joint investigation teams from across Europe.

Signs of potential trafficking and sexual exploitation

include:

- Multiple female foreign nationals living at the same address.
- Occupants are rarely seen outside.
- Occupants of premises change regularly.
- Male callers day and night staying for only a short time.
- Details of sexual activity such as cards and advertisements.

For further information about the campaign or information about the signs of trafficking and sexual exploitation, go to [the campaign microsite](#).

If you believe someone may be a victim of traffickers or of sexual exploitation please contact Police Scotland on 101 or contact the Modern slavery helpline on 08000 121 700. In an emergency people should always call 999.